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ROBERT CHANCELLOR/SALISBURY JULY 11, 1978

RHODESIA: IS THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT WORKING?

ANNCR:

RHODESIA IS ONLY SIX MONTHS AWAY FROM INTENDED MAJORITY RULE UNDER THE SALISBURY AGREEMENT, WHICH SETS UP A BI-RACIAL INTERIM GOVERNMENT. VOA'S BOB CHANCELLOR HAS THIS BACKGROUND REPORT FROM SALISBURY.

VOICE:

IT'S AN EASY WAY OUT TO SAY THAT IT'S TOO EARLY TO TELL WHETHER THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT APPROACH WILL WORK. BUT NO OTHER JUDGMENT CAN YET BE MADE ABOUT IT. CERTAINLY IT HAS HAD SOME MAJOR FAILINGS SINCE THE SALISBURY AGREEMENT WAS SIGNED MARCH THIRD, AND THE TRANSITION HAS MOVED MUCH MORE SLOWLY THAN ANTICIPATED. BUT THE SIGNATORIES OF THE SALISBURY ACCORD DO NOT AGREE THAT IT HAS FAILED.

BISHOP ABEL MUZOREWA TOOK SHARP EXCEPTION TO THAT SUGGESTION IN AN INTERVIEW WITH V.O.A. HE SAID THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT HAS SET UP A LIST OF OBJECTIVES, AND IS IN THE PROCESS OF TICKING THEM OFF (DEALING WITH THEM ONE BY ONE). HE CITED AS PROGRESS THE STOPPING OF EXECUTIONS OF POLITICAL PRISONERS, THE RELEASE OF POLITICAL DETAINEES, AND PROGRESS IN THE DRAFTING OF A CONSTITUTION. AND THE REVEREND NDABININGI SITHOLE, ENROUTE TO THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY TO ARGUE THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT CASE, SAID THE OBJECTIVE OF THE RHODESIAN STRUGGLE -- THE FREE EXERCISE OF ONE MAN ONE VOTE -- HAS BEEN ACHIEVED.

THE BLACK LEADERS APPEAR TO BE SO COMMITTED TO THE INTERNAL SETTLEMENT AND ITS SUCCESS THAT THEY ARE THE ONES RELUCTANT TO ATTEND THE CONFERENCE OF ALL THE PARTIES INVOLVED IN RHODESIA, BOTH INTERNAL LEADERS AND THE EXTERNALLY-BASED GUERRILLAS, AS IS BEING URGED BY THE UNITED STAES AND BRITAIN.

THE BIGGEST FAILING HAS BEEN THAT A CALL FOR A CEASEFIRE AND A RETURN OF GUERRILLAS UNDER AN AMNESTY PROGRAM HAS LARGELY BEEN IGNORED BY THE GUERRILLAS. EVEN BLACK LEADERS SITHOLE AND MUZOREWA ADMIT THAT THE CEASEFIRE HAS MOVED MORE SLOWLY THAN EXPECTED. IN FACT, THE LEVEL OF CONFLICT HAS INCREASED SHARPLY SINCE MARCH THIRD.

WHITE PARLIAMENTARIANS ALREADY SEEM TO BE SEEKING A SCAPEGOAT. SOME RECENT SPEECHES HAVE INCLUDED COMMENTS LIKE "THE BLACKS PROMISED TO DELIVER A CEASEFIRE AND HAVE FAILED TO DO SO." BUT BLACK PARLIAMENTARIAN RONALD SADOMBA SAID THAT THAT IS AN UNFAIR POSITION, ADDING, "WHITE POLICY CAUSED FIFTEEN YEARS OF FIGHTING, SINCE NINETEEN SIXTY-TWO, ABD THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN UNABLE TO QUENCH IT. TO EXPECT SITHOLE AND MUZOREWA TO DO IT IN FOUR MONTHS IS RIDICULOUS." MISTER SADOMBA SAID THAT WAR WILL CONTINUE UNTIL RACIAL DISCRIMINATION IS TRULY DISMANTLED AND THE GUERRILLAS SEE PROGRESS TO COME HOME TO.

ONE OF THE RESULTS OF THE FAILURE OF A CEASEFIRE TO TAKE HOLD IS THAT THE PLANNED FORM OF ONE MAN ONE VOTE ELECTIONS HAS BEEN CHANGED FROM HOLDING ELECTIONS IN EACH PROPOSED CONSTITUENCY TO ONE OF VOTING FOR PARTY'S LIST UNDER A PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION SYSTEM THIS WAY, IF CERTAIN AREAS CANNOT BE SECURED ENOUGH FOR BALLOTING TO TAKE PLACE, THE ELECTIONS CAN STILL BE CONSIDERED TO BE COMPLETE.

WESTERN DIPLOMATS FORESEE A POSSIBILITY THAT THOSE ELECTIONS MIGHT BE HELD, THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE A LARGE ENOUGH TURNOUT TO BE CREDIBLE, AND THAT THAT WOULD MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO CONTINUE TO IGNORE THE ACHIEVEMENT OF MAJORITY RULE IN RHODESIA. BUT IT NOW IS A RACE FOR TIME WHETHER THE THINGS STILL REQUIRED TO BE DONE CAN BE COMPLETED BEFORE THE SCHEDULED DECEMBER THIRTY-FIRST BIRTH OF AN INDEPENDENT ZIMBABWE.

JS/RTD

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